



**Written Testimony Supporting House Joint Resolution No. 16,  
Approving an Amendment to the State Constitution To Grant Increased Authority to the  
General Assembly Regarding Election Administration**

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Andrew Schneider. As Executive Director of the ACLU of Connecticut, I wish to support House Joint Resolution No. 16, Approving An Amendment To The State Constitution To Grant Increased Authority To The General Assembly Regarding Election Administration.

In the 2012 presidential election, some people in Connecticut waited hours to vote, others couldn't wait and walked away without voting and countless others never made it to the polls because Connecticut's outdated election laws so severely limited their opportunity to vote. Archaic language in the Connecticut Constitution prohibits early voting and allows absentee voting only under narrowly defined "excuses." We must fix this problem, and we can. If the General Assembly passes this resolution and voters approve a constitutional amendment, the legislature can then move toward no-excuses absentee balloting or early voting.

Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia allow any qualified voter to cast a ballot in person during a designated period prior to Election Day without excuse or justification.<sup>1</sup> It's time for Connecticut to join them in promoting and protecting this most fundamental right of a citizen, the right to vote and to have one's vote accurately and fairly counted. Early voting would be good for democracy and good for Connecticut. It would increase voter participation while easing congestion at the polls on Election Day and it would allow extra time to resolve confusion, questions and problems regarding polling places and registration lists.

While early voting is good for everyone, it is particularly crucial to some people who are vulnerable to disenfranchisement because of physical disability, lack of transportation or other limitations. A study of Ohio voters found that women, the elderly and the poor are most likely to take advantage of early voting.<sup>2</sup> And a national study found that African American and Hispanic voters have an extra reason to vote early – they are between two to three times more likely than white voters to wait more than 30 minutes to vote in person at their polling places.<sup>3</sup> Last year, when Hurricane Sandy stranded and displaced voters in Connecticut and across the Northeast,

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<sup>1</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, Report on Absentee and Early Voting, updated Sept. 4, 2012, available at: <http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/elections/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx#absent>

<sup>2</sup> A Study of Early Voting in Ohio Elections, Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, University of Akron, 2010, available at <http://www.uakron.edu/bliss/research/archives/2010/EarlyVotingReport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Hart Research Associates, AFL-CIO Election Night Survey 2012 (2012), <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1TGQPrvxJ5ODgSPf4CLaS1HKVmrzM4UF70gso4IUa1o/present?pli=1&ueb=true#slide=id.p59>.

we saw that unexpected circumstances can also disenfranchise citizens when voting requirements are unnecessarily rigid.

The ACLU of Connecticut supports this resolution and respectfully requests that this committee approve it in this session.